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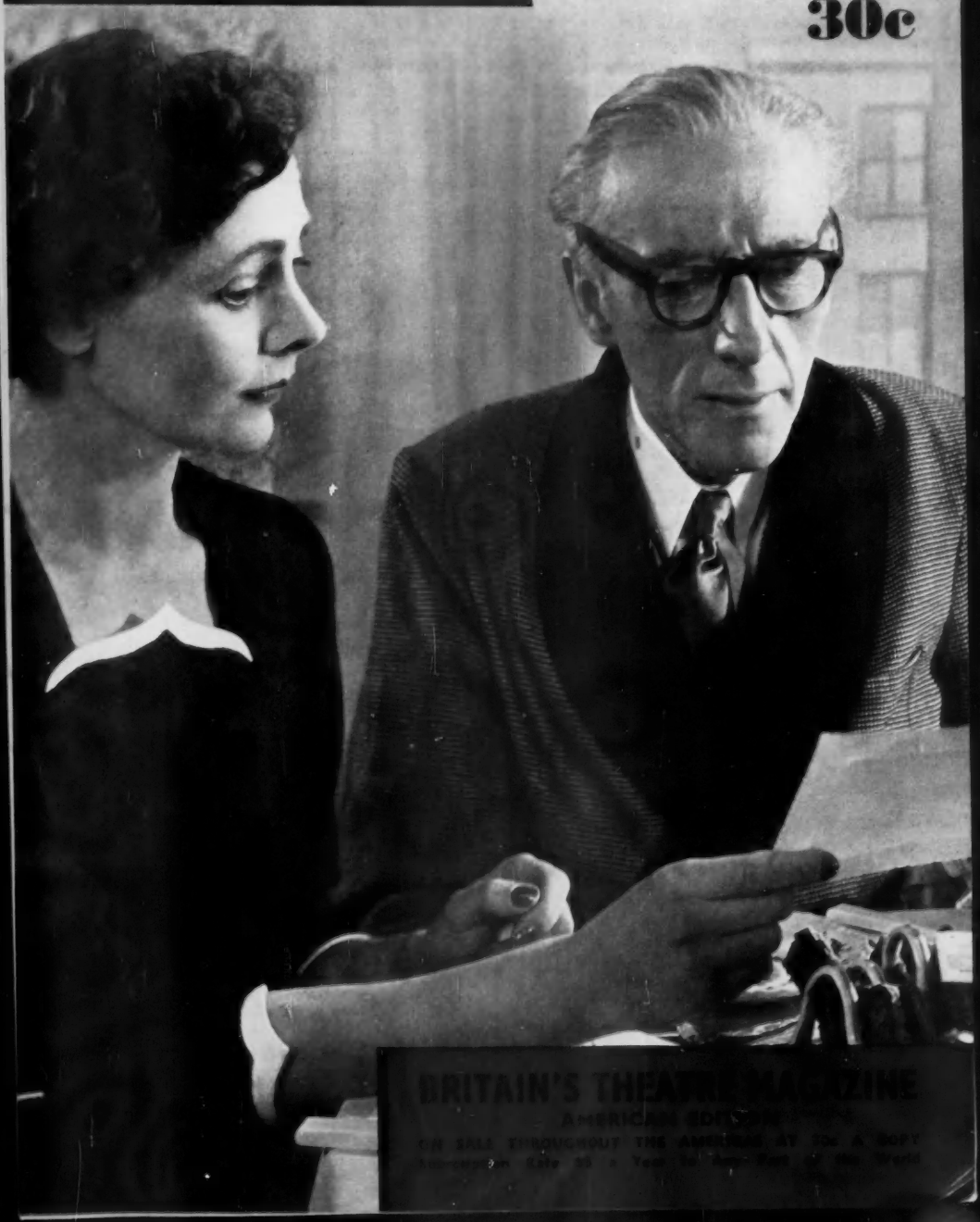

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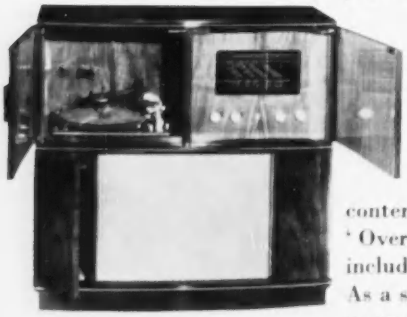

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(P128)

THEATRE WORLD

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AUGUST 1955

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Over the Footlights

ENCOURAGED by the success of *The Boy Friend*, and no doubt intimidated by the impossibility of measuring up to the mammoth American musicals, the English theatre seems to be experimenting with a new and modest kind of musical comedy, if we read the advent of *Twenty Minutes South* and *Wild Thyme* aright. These two shows in their different ways have a lot to recommend them and it is to be hoped that the favourable, rather than the adverse, criticism will weigh with theatregoers.

Whatever the outcome, it is good to know that the shows have at least made two new discoveries in Denis Quilley and Louie Ramsay.

As we write the West End awaits with anticipation the opening of the season of *Much Ado* and *King Lear* at the Palace Theatre, in which John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft (*Much Ado*), Moira Lister, Helen Cherry and Claire Bloom lead the Stratford-upon-Avon Company which later returns to the Continent. Other plays presented too late for review in this issue include *Home and Away* at the Garrick and *Nina*, the Roussin-Macrae comedy at the Haymarket.

During August new productions will include *Waiting for Godot* (Arts on the 3rd); *The Romanticks* (Open Air Theatre, 9th); *Mrs. Willie*, the new Alan Melville light comedy with Yvonne Arnaud, Cyril Raymond, William Mervyn, Carl Jaffé and Marian Spencer (Globe, 17th); and *Dead on Nine*, a new mystery thriller by Jack Popplewell. This is the play with which J. P. Sherwood opens the lease he has taken of the Westminster Theatre. Griffith Jones and Hy Hazell are the stars, with Andrew Cruickshank, Maurice Kaufmann, Jan Holden, Anthony Snell and Gabriel Hamilton in support. The production of this thriller, which opens on 24th August, is by Geoffrey Wardwell and the décor by Geoffrey Ghin.

Plans have now been announced for the next Old Vic Season, the third of the five-year plan to present all the thirty-six plays in the First Folio. Five more plays will be produced during the Season in addition to *Julius Caesar* (which has its first performance at the Edinburgh Festival on 22nd August); they are *The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Winter's Tale, Henry V, Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello*.

Paul Rogers, in his sixth season with the Old Vic, leads the company with Wendy Hiller and John Neville (in his third season). Also in the cast are Richard Wordsworth, Jack Gwillim, Gerald Cross, Rosemary Harris, Zena Walker and Rachel Roberts.

In the first three plays, Paul Rogers will play Brutus, Falstaff and Leontes. John Neville will be seen as Marc Antony, and Wendy Hiller will play Portia in *Julius Caesar*, Mistress Page and Hermione.

Two guest artists will appear with the company. Margaret Rawlings will play Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives* and Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, and, later in the season, Richard Burton will play Henry V (with John Neville as Chorus and Zena Walker as the Princess of France) and Othello (with Rosemary Harris as Desdemona and John Neville as Iago). F.S.

Celia Johnson and Wilfrid Hyde White in *The Reluctant Debutante* (*Angus McBean*)

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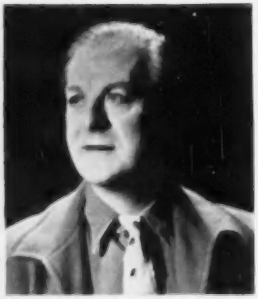
New Shows Reviewed

"The Lion in the Lighthouse"
(Embassy)

THIS comedy of commercial television by Billy Thatcher and Rolf King, which opened on 21st July, was nothing if not topical. Indeed, the authors are a jump ahead of current affairs. In their play commercial television is in full swing; panels, palling under studio presentation, have to be taken "to the lighthouse" for novelty; and the highest-paid member of the panel, whose popularity is enhanced by his brusquerie, throws a high-pressure tantrum in which, standing trouserless, he gives viewers his unedited opinions of panel games, their sponsors and their sponsors' commercial products.

Little else happens but there was never a dull moment because a gifted company kept on the move and were well worth watching, even when it was a case of an actor facing his public in the rôle of an actor facing his public. After Henry Kendall's great outburst, which is the play's core, interest was kept alert for another act and was rewarded by another humorous piece of theatre from Mr. Kendall. The other members of a panel which does not lack pull were Patricia Dainton, Charmian Innes and Barry Sinclair. Gerald Harper gave a clear outline to a grotesquely hypochondriac announcer and Norman Pierce helped a lot as the lighthouse-keeper—one of those dear, lovable, honest-to-goodness, simple souls now only to be found on the stage. Indeed, the piece contains a great deal in the way of situation as well as characterisation which appertains to the stage and nowhere else. H.G.M.



Henry Kendall

who was co-producer with David Smith-Dorrien of "The Lion in the Lighthouse," in which he also played the leading part.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream"
(Open Air Theatre)

IT is good to see *The Dream* back in Regent's Park and to enjoy once again Robert Atkins in the part of Bottom, a rôle which he has always played extremely well and which, with the passing years, has lost none of its robustness and humour. Indeed the comics make the evening and one marvels at the invention of Mr. Atkins, both as producer and performer, in devising some really funny "business" for the woodland rehearsals. The presentation of "Pyramus and Thisbe" before the Duke is quite irresistible and has not been bettered for a long time. He receives excellent support from his fellow Atheneans, in particular from Russell Thorndike as Peter Quince whose frantic promptings during the revels add greatly to the fun. Peter Street (Snug) makes a delightfully docile lion and Clement Hamelin (Starveling) a very deaf and absent-minded "man in the moon."

Of the other mortals one must mention Christopher Fettes (Lysander) and Hilda Schroder (Hermia) who both play with style and wit.

Robert Eddison's Oberon, though nobly spoken, seemed rather depressed and by contrast June Bailey appears somewhat too gay and girlish as Titania.

The dances for the fairies are pleasant, though their costumes, until softened by the falling darkness, are unattractive. L.M.

"**The Lion in the Lighthouse**"—Embassy, 21st June.
"**A Midsummer Night's Dream**"—Open Air Theatre, 24th June.
"**The Country Wife**"—Theatre Royal, Stratford, E., 28th June.
"**Between the Lines**"—Scala, 29th June.
"**From Here and There**"—Royal Court, 29th June.
"**Peacemeal**"—Unity, 1st July.
"**Skits and Sketches**"—New Lindsey, 5th July.
"**The Shadow of Doubt**"—Saville, 7th July.
"**Twenty Minutes South**"—St. Martin's, 13th July.
"**Wild Thyme**"—Duke of York's, 14th July.

Robert Atkins

who makes a welcome return to Regent's Park as Director of the Open Air Theatre, which remained closed last year. The Folio Theatre Company now presents the plays.

"King Lear" at the Palace Theatre

David O'Brien as the Fool, John Gielgud as Lear and Anthony Nicholls as Kent in the Stratford-upon-Avon touring company's production of "King Lear," which had its first London production at the Palace on 26th July too late for review this month. "Much Ado About Nothing" is the other play in the repertory. Further scenes from both plays, together with pictures and reviews of "The Merry Wives" and "Titus Andronicus" (at the Stratford Memorial Theatre) will be included next month.

"The Country Wife"

(Theatre Royal, Stratford, E.)

THE London Players, a new company, presented William Wycherley's "pleasant and instructive satire" as their first offering on 28th June. Since the play has not been seen in London since Mr. Tyrone Guthrie produced it at the Old Vic in 1936, readers may not object to be reminded that the country wife of the play is off her head with an infatuation for the first man of fashion who takes notice of her. There is nothing extraordinary in that, but Horner, the man in question, is a more original creation; in the Volpone class, in fact. Horner is so attached to lechery that he sets afoot a statement that he is impotent, in order that women's menfolk shall discard their customary protection. This daring and bawdy theme, well suited to the taste of patrons of the Restoration playhouse, is handled by Wycherley with ingenuity and wit. But he is not a writer for all time and his work shows best when the conditions of the theatre he wrote for are most closely copied. Fine clothes, fine manners, brave airs and exquisite style are necessary. The clothes of the period can be copied but the airs have to come by nature and they are nowadays very scarce. That a more accomplished team could not have been assembled for the venture seems strange. However, one or two good performers can save an evening and the parts of the libertine, the gull and the jealous husband were well enough in the hands of Mr. Nigel Davenport, Mr. Colin Jeavons and Mr. Julian Somers respectively. Among the ladies, Miss Denyse de Mauny alone displayed proper period style. The others seemed concerned to give colour to Horner's spurious misogyny. *(Continued overleaf)*

The Country Wife *(Contd.)*

Paradoxically it can be claimed that decorum is really the keynote to this and to most Restoration plays. Honour is frequently stressed, albeit with equivocation. The costume enforces a degree of decorum that the language seems to endanger. At a critical moment Horner and Lady Fidget went over the border in this production.

The décor by Miss Clare Jeffery was a very agreeable feature of the presentation. The costumes appeared authentic—fine but not fantasticated—and the economical screen-sets had decorative formality, functioned well and provided an attractive setting.

H.G.M.

"Between the Lines" *(Scala)*

THE diversity of talents employed by The Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club in their 1955 revue and the agreeable playing by their orchestra, directed by Mr. Alan Vening, made their performances very enjoyable. Among topical items, Mr. Maurice Holt's piece about the latest craze in coffee-shops was very welcome; so absolutely due.

Mr. Brian Marber, who devised and produced the revue, gave a notably good burlesque of an American film actor and successfully hit off several microphonic performers, among whom the Russian news-commentator was eminent. In Mr. Peter Woodthorpe there seemed to be a dynamic of humour. His phrases in Mr. Arthur Marshall's sketch about the old general who painted in OILS seemed jet-propelled. In various rôles, he was always master of the job. Mr. Jonathan Miller, who writes his own scripts, is now known as a clever practitioner of the idiosyncratic style of humour of which Mr. Danny Kaye is the leading exponent. He was pleasant to watch and his inconsequent fancies, pushed across with energetic miming, were vastly beguiling. The death of a national hero, however, is something that many would regard as unsuitable material for laughs. It was good to hear Mr. Rory McEwen singing his own songs to his own guitar accompaniment.

The modern psychological approach to the study of 19th century writers was hit off in a nice piece about the Bröntes by Mr. Colin Pearson, to music by Mr. Robin Beaumont, in which Mr. Brian Welch, Mr. Willie Eustace and Mr. Julian Jebb effectively represented Charlotte, Emily and Anne. Mr. Eustace is a finished female impersonator.

Mr. Noël Coward was not neglected Mr. Brian Welsh gasped out clipped utterances in a number written by Mr. Julian Jebb and Mr. David Gribble, beautifully entitled "In which we have the nerve."

H.G.M.

Rovi Pavinoff
the well-known dancer, is now artistic director and premier danseur of the recently formed Cosmopolitan Ballet, which began a provincial tour at The Harrow Coliseum on 25th July. The company's repertory includes a new ballet, "Suite in Rose," with choreography by Rovi Pavinoff, and the classics "Coppélia," "Giselle," "Swan Lake" and "Casse-Noisette."

"From Here and There" *(Royal Court)*

THIS Anglo-American revue, which is directed by Laurier Lister, has some good things but is not as taut and spontaneous as *Airs on a Shoestring*, though the news that Max Adrian has joined the company in place of the American artist, James MacColl, is likely to add body to the entertainment. As seen on the second night, Betty Marsden and June Whitfield, the English stars, far outweighed in talent the Americans James MacColl and Richard Tone. On the whole it can be said that all the English artistes scored over the Americans, though we liked Richard Tone's dancing, particularly in "Scene Change" and "Temple Bell" (with April Olrich), and Ellen Martin had an appeal of her own.

(Continued on page 8)

"The Country Wife"

● Scenes from Wycherley's famous comedy, which was staged at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, E., during July by a new company, London Players Ltd. First London revival of the play since Tyrone Guthrie's production in 1936, the play was directed by Tony Richardson, with settings by Clare Jeffrey.

Top: Lady Fidget (Margaret Vines) expresses mock horror at the idea of being secluded with the dissembling Mr. Horner (*left*. Marriott Longman as Mrs. Dainty Fidget).

Centre left: Mrs. Pinchwife (Barbara Fishwick), dressed in man's clothing, is shown round the Exchange by her husband (Julian Somers).

Centre right: Alithea (Denyse de Mauny) tries to teach town ways to her ingenuous sister-in-law, Mrs. Pinchwife.

Right: Sparkish the fop (Colin Jeavons, *centre*) tries to drag off Harcourt (Jon Rollason) and Mr. Horner (Nigel Davenport) to a stag party. (The play is reviewed in this issue).

John Clements
who this year celebrates his twenty-fifth year in the theatre, is appearing in "The Shadow of Doubt" at the Saville, which theatre is now under his personal management. The play is reviewed on another page. Mr. Clements and his wife, Kay Hammond, are also planning later on during next winter to establish the Saville as a West End home of classical plays, presenting five or six plays a year to run some eight weeks each. These plays will then be re-rehearsed at the end of the Saville run in a film studio and made into television films for Commercial Television programmes. Mr. Clements will also personally supervise television productions made directly as films, the first of these being Turgenev's "A Month in the Country" with Margaret Leighton in the leading rôle.

New Shows Reviewed *(Contd.)*

Betty Marsden and June Whitfield were always amusing, and particularly in "Liberty Belles" (with Charlotte Mitchell) and, solo, in "Paradise Lost, the atom island number (Betty Marsden), and "Oscar" (June Whitfield). Charlotte Mitchell, providing her own material, had two good items in "Motherhood" and "Life Sentence." From the American side Myra de Groot was amusing in her solo item "Mass Production," and Ellen Martin brought great charm to "The Kite."

Betty Marsden
seen here in "Airs on a Shoestring" is making another big hit in "Here and There," also at the Royal Court Theatre.

The dances and musical numbers are staged by George Heawood, while most of the lyrics and sketches are by Jack Gray and Jerry Bono, with music by Dolores Claman. Décor is by Stanley Moore and music under the direction of Charles Zwar.

F.S.

"Peacemeal" *(Unity)*

DID not Wilde say that enough was as bad as a meal? Unity's 1955 summer revue has 31 numbers and runs for three hours. It is enough. One is impressed by the extent of the society's resources but, in such a deal of material, some items could be spared.

After rather a disappointing hour, a lullaby by B. Woolf, music by John Berry, was pleasantly sung by Miss Doreen Davies. There followed Mr. Lionel Bart's "Newmarket Nightmare," in which it appeared that "they've entered a filly from the U.S.S.R." This was well put over by Mr. Laurence Davies, Mr. Jerry Spring and Miss Isobel Streeter and hope revived. Two amusing numbers by Mr. Eric Paice succeeded, one about an extraordinary delay in finding a place in a school, and "Wreath Lecture," a sure laughter-raiser as delivered by Mr. Arthur Hall. In Part Two, inter alia, Mr. Jerry Spring was artistically alcoholic; the washing-powder racket took another knock; Mr. Bernard Stone presented an Army sergeant endeavouring to persuade service-men to stay on for another year; and "Ja, Alfred" by Mr. Eric Paice had an apposite bite.

The settings by Mr. Bob Dyson were attractive but many of the numbers had no settings and the narrowness of the strip of fore-stage was a severe handicap to the show.

H.G.M.

"Skits and Sketches" *(New Lindsey)*

ON 5th July Arthur Luce Klein presented his one-man show for the first time in this country.

An American living in Paris, Mr. Klein has had considerable success in that city where he gave his show at the Petit-Marigny Theatre and later toured the Continent. An ardent man of the theatre, he has taught drama and directed plays at both the University of California and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, translated several of

Anouilh's plays and directed and acted in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* in Paris, later touring the Continent and Scandinavia.

His *Skits and Sketches* consisted of six sketches, four written by himself, one by Tchekhov and a dramatisation of Edgar Allan Poe's spine-chilling story "The Cask of Amontillado."

Of the four original numbers "Hello World," an American sailor's meeting with a young girl in Hyde Park, and "Mornings at Eight," a devastating satire on commercial television were the most successful. The prospect of meeting Mr. Klein's "Uncle Edward" with all his bounce and bonhommie first thing in the morning is an appalling thought. "Directing a Play" was an amusing number showing three directors at work—the Frenchman being particularly well put over.

Tchekhov's "On the Harmfulness of Tobacco" was perhaps over long, though in its way very moving and pathetic. The introduction during which Mr. Klein makes-up in front of the audience was original and entertaining. L.M.

"The Shadow of Doubt" (*Saville*)

FOR the opening production under his management at the Saville, John Clements has chosen a topical first play by Norman King, a Midlands civil engineer.

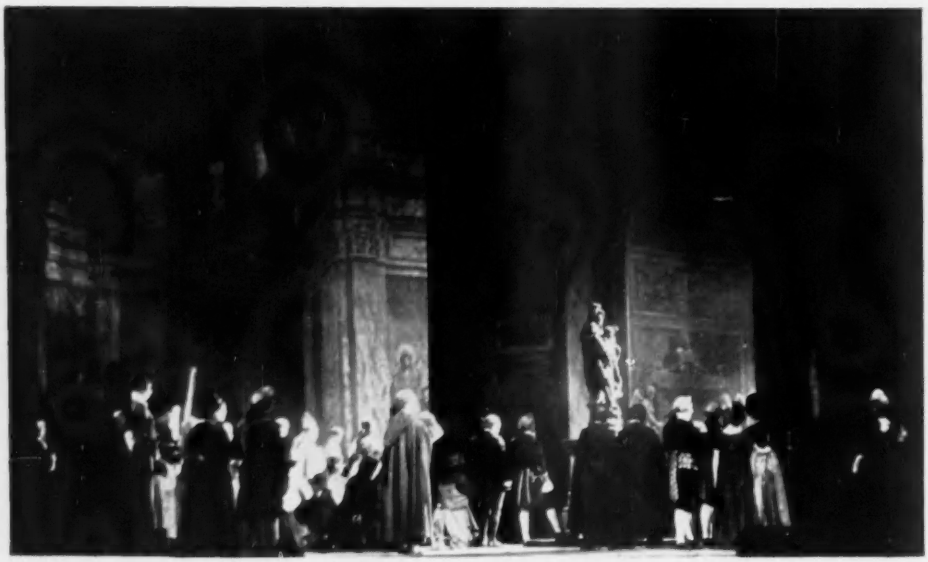
There are faults, as one must expect with a first play, particularly in the slow opening and in the change of emphasis which takes place in the development of the theme, but, viewed as a topical thriller *The Shadow of Doubt* is good entertainment.

John Clements appears as a leading atomic physicist who has served a prison sentence for revealing atomic secrets and at one point we are led to believe he may have done this for conscience sake. This would have made an absorbing philosophical background for a serious play. But no, it transpires that the scientist's discovery had been dubbed a failure by his colleagues after investigation of his secret formula, so that it is only a personal problem we see worked out. Arthur, the scientist lives with his loyal wife, Laura, in a seedy flat in the North of England where, incognito, they are trying to rebuild their life together. But they are unwillingly involved in further investigations by M.I.5 (the man upstairs is working for M.I.5), and the scientist, in order to regain his self respect, is almost guilty of more treason.

(*Continued on page 43*)

Irene Worth
who is starring in Thornton Wilder's "A Life in the Sun," which has its world première at the Edinburgh Festival on 22nd August. Miss Worth co-stars with Michael Goodliffe who has been appearing in "The Lark" at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and was seen in the 1952 Edinburgh Festival in "The River Line." He will play King Admetus in "A Life in the Sun," the rôle recently reliquished by Montgomery Clift, the American actor.

Coral Browne
is starring in André Roussin's farce "Nina," translated by Arthur Macrae and directed by Rex Harrison, with décor by Arthur Barbosa, which opened at the Haymarket on 27th July, too late for review this month. Miss Browne, who appeared recently with great success in "Simon and Laura," has taken over the rôle in "Nina" which Dame Edith Evans was obliged to abandon through illness.



A scene from Act I of the recent production of "Tosca" at Covent Garden, when the title rôle was sung by Renata Tebaldi, Scarpia by Tito Gobbi and Cavaradossi by Ferruccio Tagliavini. *(Picture by Louis Klemantaski Ltd.)*

The Summer's Operas

by Penelope Turing

THIS summer Covent Garden has almost staged a return to pre-war international seasons. Almost, but not quite, for the star-studded two cycles of the *Ring* in German and the four performances each of *Tosca* and *Aida* in Italian hardly form a season in themselves, and they were interspersed with repertory performances by the home team. The enthusiasm for these special nights, however, shows how great is the demand to hear some of the finest singers of our time. For years Italian opera lovers in London have complained bitterly that they have had to make do with a few international *Normas* and *Trovatores*, and that preference in top-line casting was given to German works, while the German enthusiasts reply that though they get a few first-class Wagner and perhaps Strauss performances each year these are few enough in all conscience, and that anyway there are not, as a rule, so many German works in the home repertory.

It is no disparagement to the regular Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells Companies that opera goers in the largest city in the world should want to hear the best available European singers in their own nations' operas. One may hope that the public's response to these red-letter nights, despite greatly increased prices, will encourage the Royal Opera House to face the difficulties and expense of an extended international programme next year.

The story of *Tosca* is really melodrama, and it needs dynamic singing and acting, so often lacking in repertory performances, to lift it into the realms of tragedy. These qualities it had in the Covent Garden star performances, and the result was a *tour de force*. Renata Tebaldi makes a magnificent and nobly sung Tosca. Ferruccio Tagliavini has all the best qualities of the Italian tenor, a rich and powerful voice, a pleasant personality, and the passionate style of acting which is needed to make Cavaradossi convincing and moving. Tito Gobbi was a superb Scarpia, aristocratic, handsome, evil and finely sung. Few operas depend so completely on the leading singers, but the smaller parts were well sung by the home company, and the conducting of Francesco Molinari-Pradelli carried the opera to its heights of tragic intensity. The result justified the advance enthusiasm, and will certainly increase the demand for more such performances.

Wagner's *Ring* in 1955 largely fulfilled

Top picture. **Elsie Morison and John Lanigan in the new production of "The Bartered Bride" at Covent Garden, and** *above:* **Peter Pears as Vasek in the same opera.** *(Pictures by Houston-Rogers.) Above right* **Svet Svanholm as Siegfried at the Opera House.** *(Picture by Wilfrid Newton.)*

the promise of last year's new production by Professor Rudolf Hartmann with Leslie Hurry's sets. This new London *Ring* is settling down well, and provides a happy and undistracting compromise between old and new methods of Wagnerian production. There was, as so often happens, a little sword and spear trouble, but such hitches are insignificant among much musical excellence.

Rudolf Kempe's conducting, restrained in *Rheingold* but rising to rare heights later, set the seal of distinction on the whole work, and among the singers we had for the most part Europe's First Eleven. In the first cycle Hans Hotter returned to give us his superb Wotan, commanding, wayward and tender, reconciling the inconsistencies and difficulties of this strange character. It would be hard to find a finer Loge than Erich Witte, or a better Alberich and Mime

(Continued overleaf)

than Otakar Kraus and Peter Klein. Margaret Harshaw's Brünnhilde is developing well, and in the absence of Sylvia Fisher Leonie Rysanek gave us an exquisite Sieglinde. Set Svanholm's familiar and delightful Siegfried is always musicianly and well acted, and Ramon Vinay was a particularly fine Siegmund this year. Amy Shuard started her Wagnerian career well as Freia and one of the Valkyries. Hunding is still one of Frederick Dalberg's worst parts and the giants were weak, but on the whole the singing was of a high standard.

The new production of *The Bartered Bride* was of special interest as it was the first opera conducted at Covent Garden by Rafael Kubelik, who takes up his appointment as musical director of the Royal Opera House next autumn. The production is bright and attractive in its chocolate-box way, and Mr. Kubelik, who is a compatriot of Smetana's, gave us a gay, charming reading of the score without allowing it to deteriorate into a romp. There was pleasant if not outstanding singing from Elsie Morison, John Lanigan, Peter Pears and Adele Leigh, and the dances—so often a weak spot in opera—were particularly well handled.

The only recent new production at Sadler's Wells was *The Magic Flute*, given at the end of February. This was conducted by Rudolf Schwarz, and was on the whole satisfactory. One cannot expect the highest standard of style and polish that Mozart needs in this kind of repertory production, but for the not-too-critical this *Magic Flute* provided a colourful and enjoyable evening. Thomas Round gave a good account of himself as Tamino, Stanley Clarkson was in good voice as Sarastro and Denis Dowling and Marion Studholme were delightful as Papageno and Papagena.

During the season I saw revivals of *Faust* and *Die Fledermaus*. *Faust* is apt to become painfully hackneyed, but this performance was worth seeing for the beautifully sung Marguerite of Joan Stuart, who is developing into one of Sadler's Wells most promising sopranos, and Stanley Clarkson's fine, saturnine Mephistopheles. The *Fledermaus* performance lacked elegance, except for the Prince Orlofsky of Anna Pollak—what an accomplished actress and singer she is!—but it was disarmingly gay and amusing. Thomas Round makes a good Eisenstein and his drunken scene with Frank (Frederick Sharp) in Act 3 was extremely funny. Marion Studholme sang and acted Adele to good effect.

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ANNA MASSEY as Jane and JOHN MERIVALE as David Hoylake-Johnson in a scene from the play.

"The Reluctant Debutante"

at the Cambridge

Picture by Angus McBean

● **SCENES from William Douglas Home's amusing comedy (reviewed last month) in which Celia Johnson and Wilfrid Hyde White are starring and in which Raymond Massey's daughter has made a big hit on her first appearance on the West End stage. The play is directed by Jack Minster with setting by Hutchinson Scott.**

Sheila Broadbent (Celia Johnson). Jane's well-meaning but somewhat feather-brained mother, is having trouble finding partners for her daughter's coming-out season. The Broadbents have taken a London flat but Jane is decidedly uninterested and would much prefer to have stayed in the country with her beloved horses.

The scene later that evening when Mabel Crosswaite (Ambrosine Phillpotts) calls and regales Sheila with the latest society gossip and particularly with the exploits of a "sinister" young gentleman called David Hoylake-Johnson.

Jane, left alone with David Bulloch (Jeremy Longhurst), who is partnering Clarissa, Mabel's debutante daughter, finds she has to keep this eligible young bachelor at arms length.

Sheila books a table for eight at "Quags." Meantime, she has discovered to her horror that in her search for a partner for Jane she has got hold of the wrong telephone number and has invited David Hoylake-Johnson along, thinking all the time she was talking to David Bulloch. (*Left:* Anna Steele as Clarissa.)

Sheila tries to be offhand with young Hoylake-Johnson when he arrives, but Jane is definitely interested, having met him at a recent coming-out ball.

The two mothers are unmistakably on the defensive as the debonair Hoylake-Johnson holds forth, but Jane, hitherto bored with young men, sits entranced.

In the early hours of the following morning Jane's parents get back from the dance and await with varying degrees of anxiety the return of their "wayward" daughter, who had gone off with her fascinating escort. Sheila Broadbent particularly fears the worst, though her husband, Jimmy (Wilfrid Hyde White), takes a somewhat more philosophical view. Eventually David brings Jane home and the much-relieved parents, though consumed with curiosity, feel obliged to make a show of going to bed.

It is quite clear that David, though greatly attracted, has been treating Jane with the greatest circumspection, and it is Jane who encourages their first kiss, just at the moment when Mother looks in on a pretext.

Below: It is Jimmy's turn to do a little eavesdropping at the kitchen door. Jane naturally takes a very poor view of these interruptions.

Below right: Early next morning David Bulloch calls to propose to Jane, who, however, flatly turns him down, much to her mother's annoyance.

Jane has a heart-to-heart talk with her father and wheedles out of him some telling confessions about his early love affairs.

Inevitably when David Hoylake-Johnson calls to see Jane, Jimmy Broadbent is instructed by his wife to throw this most undesirable suitor out. But Jimmy has a talk with David and hears the real truth about the so-called scandal which Mabel Crosswaite had relayed. He takes a great liking to the young man and wants to help, but realises that Sheila is in no mood to see reason. So the two men stage a mock fight and David is sent packing, though not before Jimmy has cast-iron plans in his mind. How, in fact, David Hoylake - Johnson is turned into the most eligible of bachelors in Jane's mother's eyes it would be unfair to divulge, but there is an amusing twist to the play providing a neat and happy ending.

Laurence Olivier as Macbeth

● An interesting impression by artist Veronica Haigh of Sir Laurence Olivier in this season's production of *Macbeth* at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon. Sir Laurence's rendering of this famous Shakespearean rôle is one of the most brilliant of his distinguished career. The Oliviers are not appearing in the most recently produced play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (first performance 12th July) but will be seen in *Titus Andronicus*, the final production of the season, which goes into the repertory on 16th August.

NIGEL PATRICK as Pa Pennypacker and ELIZABETH SELLARS as Ma Pennypacker in a moment from Act III.

'The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker'

at the New Theatre

LIAM O'Brien's successful American comedy, set in 1890, which was reviewed in our last issue, has settled down to a solid success at the New Theatre, where the play is directed by John Fernald with décor by Paul Mayo. A splendid cast has been assembled to present this humorous tale of a bigamist-freethinker, and Nigel Patrick has further enhanced his considerable reputation for light comedy with his clever performance in the title rôle.

Wilbur: . . . I wanted to see Kate . . . I'll wait out here . . .

The young Rev. Wilbur Fifield calls on the Pennypacker home in Wilmington, Delaware, and surprises Laurie Pennypacker and her ballet class. *L to R*: Frances Guthrie as Laurie, John Forrest as Wilbur, and Jocelyn Britton and Elizabeth Saunders as the pupils.

Pictures by Angus McBean

Below: *Wilbur*: Kate, what is the matter?
Kate: I'm barefoot, that's all.

Wilbur catches Kate unawares when he comes to tell her he has an offer of a living in Rhode Island if they can get married at once. (Jocelyn James as Kate Pennypacker.)

David: Aunt Jane, do we have to do this on Saturday? It's work.

The following day Aunt Jane (Helena Pickard) is drilling her nephews for their duties at their sister's wedding and great excitement prevails in the house. (Richard Peters as Edward, Julian Yardley as David and Peter Murphy as Ben.)

Pa: What are all the long chins for? I heard there was to be a wedding, not a funeral.

Pa Pennypacker arrives home from Philadelphia where he spends half his time looking after the interests of the prosperous family canned pork business. But a lot has just happened. For when the domineering Grampa Pennypacker had arrived to forbid the hasty wedding of Kate and Wilbur, a strange young man was also hovering around asking for Mr. Horace Pennypacker, as was an unknown Sheriff with a summons. When at last Grampa deigns to ask the young man's business the terrible revelation is made that he is Pa Pennypacker's son and one of a family of nine living respectably in Philadelphia. No wonder his wife is looking stunned when Pa Pennypacker makes his jaunty entrance.

Pa: Doctor how are you? And Wilbur—Katherine telegraphed me the good news.

Aunt Jane Pennypacker has fainted from shock, but Pa Pennypacker rises to the occasion when Wilbur and his father come in. *Centre*: Mike Morgan as the young man from Philadelphia and Noel Iliff as Dr. Fifield.

Henry: . . . As to the legitimate: Fine word, legitimate!

Henry of the Wilmington family has taken the news of his father's bigamy with equanimity and is spouting Shakespeare when his infuriated grandfather arrives. *L to R:* Hugh Wakefield and Kenneth Fortescue.

Pa: I can't admit to being a bigamist, Doctor. However, it is true my having two wives and two families . . .

Pa Pennypacker, already known as an advanced free-thinker, propounds his philosophy at some length to the bewildered Dr. Fifield.

Below: David, Edward and Ben Pennypacker, on hearing about their father, decide to run away from home.

Kate: Is it true, father?

Pa Pennypacker's complacency is somewhat shaken when he realises the effect of the revelation on his daughter.

Pa: No broken bones. They're as good as new . . .

All the younger children had run away, and there is great rejoicing as they are found one by one and brought home again.

Aunt Jane: That's enough girls . . . Laurie, you'd better get to bed. I'll bring dinner up to you.

Even Laurie, who ran away by train, eventually returns, to her sisters' great joy. Pa Pennypacker stands in the background, subdued.

Ma: Horace—is Mrs. Pennypacker, the Philadelphia Mrs. Pennypacker—is she dead?
Pa: Zereida's been dead eight years, Emily.

Just at the moment when Pa Pennypacker is leaving, convinced that his wife will never forgive him, Ma Pennypacker asks the crucial question which puts matters right between them. But there is still the family, and it is agreed that they shall decide whether he stays or not. Meantime Wilbur has never faltered in his desire to marry Kate and is heart-broken when she tries to cancel the wedding.

Pa: I want you to tell me whether you think I'm right or wrong. Whatever you say will be final on the subject. I'll accept it.

The children are asked to decide. Their decision is that their father was wrong but that nevertheless they want him to stay. There is general rejoicing all round and even new happiness for Aunt Jane, who, having grown fond of young Horace, asks if she may go to Philadelphia, to look after Pa Pennypacker's other family.
A moment towards the end of the play.

Leslie Edwards

Acting Without Words

by Eric Johns

WITHOUT a shadow of doubt, Leslie Edwards is the most compelling actor in British ballet. One moment he causes infinite amusement as the flashy gigolo in *Façade* and the next he wrings our very hearts as the defeated Red King in *Checkmate*. He is so much more than a dancer; he is a vital man-of-the-theatre, who chose ballet in preference to intimate revue, where he could easily have combined the versatility of Nelson Keys with the wit of Henry Kendall.

Later this month Mr. Edwards will be dancing at Covent Garden with the Sadler's Wells Ballet during the short farewell season which precedes their fourth American tour. Though still under forty, this dancer has been with the Sadler's Wells Ballet longer than any other artist in the company; he joined the organisation when it was known as the Vic-Wells Ballet in 1933, and has never left them.

While still a schoolboy he wanted to go into musical comedy and with that aim in view he used to search *The Stage* advertisements announcing auditions. On two occasions he had the courage to attend, but through lacking both years and a singing voice, he was politely but quickly dismissed. It was a bitter disappointment because he felt so sure of being able to make a mark in the theatre, if only given the chance.

Realising would-be dancers are considered seriously while still in their early teens, he decided to get into the theatre through the medium of the ballet. Marie Rambert gave him lessons and he made his first appearance on the stage in *The Enchanted Grove*, a ballet by Rupert Doone. Work was only spasmodic, of course, and the salary not worth mentioning.

At that time the Vic-Wells Ballet were looking for male dancers to swell their ranks for an ambitious production of *Coppélia*, in which Lydia Lopokova made some guest-appearances as Swanilda at Sadler's Wells. Leslie Edwards went along and was engaged by Ninette de Valois for *Coppélia* and other productions, but on Sunday nights he continued to appear with the Ballet Rambert at the Mercury Theatre. That was how it all started and how he gained his first practical experience which was to make him one of the foremost character dancers in the world.

At one point he wavered and almost deserted the ballet. It was when the Sadler's Wells Ballet moved into Covent Garden and made the Royal Opera House their permanent home in 1946. At that time Mr. Edwards was offered a rather tempting part in *The Red Mill*, a musical comedy about to be staged at the Palace Theatre. The part was so much bigger and more attractive than that of Cattalabutte, the Master of Ceremonies in *The Sleeping Beauty*, which Ninette de Valois offered him at Covent Garden. Just as he was about to sign up and start a new career in musical comedy, he gave the matter a second thought and decided to stay in ballet.

His spectacular success as a character dancer dates from that time, when he decided to take the minor part of the Master of Ceremonies and *make* it a rôle. He succeeded and now the ballet would be unthinkable without him. Half-a-dozen different ballerinas can follow each other as the Princess Aurora, but we expect to find Leslie Edwards as Cattalabutte at every performance. He has become an institution in *The Sleeping Beauty* through making the most unpromising part a highly individualised character creation.

In the past nine years Mr. Edwards has become a specialist in what might be called non-dancing rôles or parts which appear to consist of acting to music, such as the Red King in *Checkmate*, the Beggar in *Miracle in the Gorbals* and Hilarion in *Giselle*. Though it may look comparatively easy, the movement in a non-dancing rôle has to be exact; if it is to make an impression, it has to be timed as carefully as a comedian's gag. Everything is done to music and the inflection of the music influences the strength and speed of the dancer's movement. Mr. Edwards creates his rôle afresh at each performance and his concentrated thought behind the movement gives him the power to project the meaning

(Continued on page 28)

Above, L. to R: **Leslie Edwards as the Red King in "Checkmate," in "Mirror of Witches" and in "The Lady and the Fool."** *Left:* **Mr. Edwards is seen as Hilarion in "Giselle" and as the Beggar in "Miracle in the Gorbals."** *Below:* **A characteristic study in the rôle of Dr. Coppelius in the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company's new production of "Coppélia."**

Acting Without Words *(Contd.)*

to the back of the largest theatre.

The Rake in *The Rake's Progress* is a favourite part with Mr. Edwards because it is one of the few ballet rôles concerned with development of character. He enjoys tracing the young boy's downfall, step by step, from the Rake's house to the madhouse. He also enjoys dancing this part because it gives him a chance to react to other characters in the story, as actors in a play listen to the one who happens to be speaking.

The tragic Red King in *Checkmate* is probably the most vivid creation in the dancer's repertoire and one of the most moving. His performance should give a major choreographer an idea of mounting a *King Lear* ballet upon Mr. Edwards; apart from unforgettable scenes with Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, the Storm and the King's madness should provide Mr. Edwards with spectacular opportunities.

Poignantly beautiful was his scruffy beggar in *Miracle in the Gorbals*. His masterly facial make-up alone told the poor creature's entire story. Mr. Edwards was undecided about his make-up at the dress rehearsal, so he glanced again at the Edward Burra's costume sketch and saw that the character had been given one black and one red eye. He promptly made one eye bruised and the other bloodshot, with the result that his face became worthy of the brush of a modern Hogarth. There are no actual dance steps for the Beggar in this ballet, but Robert Helpmann, who was responsible for the choreography, regarded Mr. Edwards as an actor rather than a dancer and gave him inspiring direction.

Though he rarely appears in a dancing part, he still goes to class every day because a dancer's miming demands rhythm, capable of reflecting the most delicate nuances of movement. A dancer, for instance, drinking a cup of tea in a ballet would perform the movements differently from an actor doing the same thing in a play. One is done to music and likely to be more stylised.

It is gratifying to know that years hence Leslie Edwards is still likely to be delighting us in character parts, whereas had he been a dancer in the narrowest sense of the word he would already be considering retirement from the stage. As things are, when he becomes an octogenarian himself he will still be capable of appearing as the Red King and moving us to tears.

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"My Three Angels"

● **SCENES from Sam and Bella Spewack's intriguing comedy, which is based on "Cuisine des Anges," by Albert Husson. Directed by Wallace Douglas with a most attractive setting by Rolf Gérard, the play has settled down to a big success at the Lyric Theatre.**

(Pictures by Angus McBean)

The action takes place in Cayenne in French Guiana. The time is Christmas Eve, 1910. While Felix Dulay is working at his ledgers in the living quarters of his shop a native girl slips in and steals a bottle of Chartreuse. (Cyril Luckam and Pamela Frost).

Alfred: She's beautiful.

Three convicts from the nearby settlement are at work repairing the roof of the store. Alfred comes to the rescue when Marie Louise Dulay faints on receiving a letter from France. (Elvi Hale as Marie Louise).

Marie Louise: I am going to drink to . . . to . . . my three angels.

The three convicts have lost no time in becoming involved in the Dulays' affairs and in their preparations for Christmas Day. By various means they procure the wherewithal for an excellent dinner while at the same time Joseph does a brisk trade in the store and Alfred takes Marie Louise's mind off the sad news that her young man in France is marrying another.

Gaston: You may be an idiot but even you must know I would never tolerate such a ridiculous marriage for Paul who is, at the moment, my legal heir.

The arrival of Gaston Lemare, hard-hearted owner of the store and cousin of Dulay, who has just arrived from France to look into Dulay's accounts, casts a gloom over the establishment and Marie Louise's hopes of marrying Lemare's nephew appear remoter than ever. But Lemare had reckoned without the three angels.
(Hugh Manning as Gaston Lemare.)

Joseph: Too bad I haven't got a sample of the young man's handwriting. *Jules*: Handwriting? *Joseph*: So I'm printing it. "My Darling! My Own! Come to me! I wait! I tremble!"

Joseph gets to work on Paul, who has arrived with his uncle.

Marie Louise: Paul, dear, dear, Paul . . . It's been so long . . .

Having got Paul out of his room on a pretext, the convicts are delighted when Marie Louise comes rushing down after receiving the forged note.
(Peter Barkworth as Paul Cassagnon.)

Joseph: You *do* love her?

Paul: Of course I love her. I've told her that.

The young couple have been interrupted by Paul's irate uncle, who had retired for the night. He tells them finally there is no question of their marying but when he has gone back to bed the convicts drag Paul out again, determined that Marie Louise shall be made happy if possible. Paul appears to be genuinely fond of the girl, though being forced to marry another for her money. So the three angels determine the young lovers shall have a rendezvous in the garden.

Joseph: Gentlemen of the jury, I say to you my client is directly responsible for the tremendous increase in our country's birthrate. Consider how he overworks and underpays his many employees. After a fourteen hour day, do they patronise the haunts of sin, the theatres, the concert halls, the cafes

Joseph, Jules (as the judge) and Alfred stage a mock trial of the villainous Lemare, and bring in a verdict of guilty.

Alfred: I cleaned it.

Joseph: It was in dreadful shape. The barrel was filthy. Naturally we removed the cartridges. We had to . . . they were damp, anyway.

The men have obviously taken precautions against Lemare's reappearance.

Alfred: Go, Adolphe! Right through the crack . . .

Lemare has threatened to report the convicts to the authorities so they have no qualms about taking revenge with the aid of Adolphe, their pet snake. It ought to be added that Jules and Alfred are serving sentences for murder and Joseph for forgery.

Mrs. Parole: Here, taste this cognac.

Next morning, Christmas Day, Madame Parole (Patience Collier), a customer who never pays her bills, comes to complain. But Joseph is ready for this emergency and so contrives it that this unpleasant woman discovers the body of Lemare and is then blackmailed into paying her bill.

Emilie: You know, sometimes I can't help wondering if I couldn't have made a better wife for a man who wasn't a child . . . someone who didn't believe in fairy tales . . . who depended not on others, but on himself . . . and a little on me.
Jules: Men like that have no reason to marry.

Unhappy complication for the convicts is the disappearance of Adolphe. They hunt high and low for their pet with great alarm but he is still at large when the family begin to appear. By now the three men have so endeared themselves to the Dulays that it seems quite natural that Emilie should open her heart to the understanding Jules.

Above left:

Paul: I want a doctor, I tell you.
Joseph: I have it. The garden! Let him die in the garden.

Adolphe has been recaptured. He was found by Paul when he tried to rifle his dead uncle's pockets!

Above:

A naval lieutenant arrives with a letter of introduction to M. Dulay. The three convicts believe he and Marie Louise will fall in love, and so soften the blow of the worthless Paul's death. (Clifford Elkin as the Sub-Lieutenant).

Left: Joseph: Well Your Honour, didn't we have a wonderful Christmas?

The closing moment of the play.

Whispers from the Wings

by

Looker-on

Michael Redgrave

EVERYTHING comes to those who wait, according to the old proverb. The part of Hector in *Tiger at the Gates*, the Giraudoux play about the Trojan War, has certainly come the way of Michael Redgrave, but he had to wait seventeen years. It was, however, worth waiting for because, apart from being a most rewarding part, it has set Mr. Redgrave upon the highest peak of his career to date.

Originally, Giraudoux made a special trip from Paris to see the 30-year-old Redgrave, who had already created something of a stir by playing Orlando to the Rosalind of Edith Evans at the Old Vic, but the Munich crisis caused a production of the play to be abandoned. The outbreak of war meant shelving plans once again and when there appeared to be a chance of putting on the play in New York in 1948 the translation was unsuitable.

A year ago Christopher Fry tackled the job of translating the Giraudoux play; it needed the hand of an English stylist and he performed the task magnificently. When Mr Redgrave began to study the part of Hector in the Fry version, he wondered whether it might prove to be what Edith Evans calls a "white" part, one without development. His misgivings were entirely without foundation; once Hector began to take shape it grew into a tremendous rôle. Because it holds the play together, being a sort of pivot upon which the entire cast revolves, Mr. Redgrave finds the part quite as exhausting as Shapespeare's Antony. It is a formidable admission, seeing that both Mr. Redgrave and Sir Laurence Olivier both consider Antony to be a more tiring rôle than either King Lear or Macbeth!

It is gratifying to observe so worthwhile a play as *Tiger at the Gates* becoming a genuine popular success in the West End. Mr. Redgrave had a similar experience fifteen years ago when he played Charleston in *Thunder Rock* at the little Neighbourhood Theatre for £3 a week. His faith was rewarded by a transfer to the Globe, where the play was recognised as a significant contribution to the contemporary theatre.

The theatricality of French plays appeals to Mr. Redgrave more than either their intellectuality or their philosophy. Anouilh, Sartre and Giraudoux have all written plays exciting from a purely theatrical point of view; to Mr. Redgrave it is quite irrelevant that the playwrights also happen to be either poets or philosophers.

His admiration of French dramatists is not confined to the work of contemporaries. He staged and played with Sonia Dresdel in *Parisienne*, the Ashley Dukes version of Henry Becque's comedy, at the St. James's in 1943 and six years later, with Diana Gould, he adapted Georges de Porto-Riche's play, *A Woman in Love*, and played in it at the Embassy with Margaret Rawlings. He admires the purposefulness of French playwrights, who are content to choose a subject and concentrate upon it for two-and-a-half hours.

One of the most exciting melodramas ever written, in Mr. Redgrave's opinion, is *La Tosca*, which Victorien Sardou wrote for Bernhardt. Shaw killed it stone dead in London and later it was eclipsed by Puccini's opera. The same author's *Fédora*, with which Bernhardt could fill any theatre in any part of the world, is another of Sardou's melodramatic vehicles for an actress of true star quality. Mr. Redgrave would like to appear in it with Ann Todd, if both ever happen to be free at a time when it would be possible to revive the play in 1880 décor, of course.

Mr. Redgrave is first to admit that his success in *Tiger at the Gates* is due in no small measure to Harold Clurman, the American director who came over to produce the play in London. "He is among the very finest directors," commented Mr. Redgrave. "Actors working under him are continually aware of his patience and humility and his understanding of their frailty and vulnerability. We players are not nearly as self-assured as people imagine. We are not so very different from other men, though I believe we more readily admit our vanity! The appreciation and under-

(Continued on page 43)

MICHAEL REDGRAVE as Hector.

"Tiger at the Gates"

● ONE of the most distinguished productions of the year, Christopher Fry's translation of Jean Giraudoux's "La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu" is a most satisfying piece of theatre. Mr. Fry has already proved himself the ideal translator from the French, and no actor could have undertaken more successfully the onerous rôle of Hector than Michael Redgrave, whose stature as one of our foremost leading actors is greatly enhanced by this magnificent performance. The play has much humour as well as much philosophy from the modern angle, and Loudon Sainthill's sunlit décor and the incidental music composed by Lennox Berkeley are other ingredients making for enjoyment.

This is a Robert L. Joseph production, presented in London by Stephen Mitchell, and the play is directed by the well-known American producer, Harold Clurman.

The action of the play takes place in and around the Palace at Troy.

Right: Hector's wife, Andromache (Barbara Jefford, *left*), confident that the return of her husband from the wars will mean that the Gates of War will be closed, is derided by Hector's sister, Cassandra (Leueen McGrath, *right*), who sees a tricky political situation in the continued presence of Helen in the City of Troy.

Pictures by Armstrong Jones

Hector, reunited with Andromache after his return to Troy and sated with war, longs all the more for peace when he hears that his wife is expecting a child.

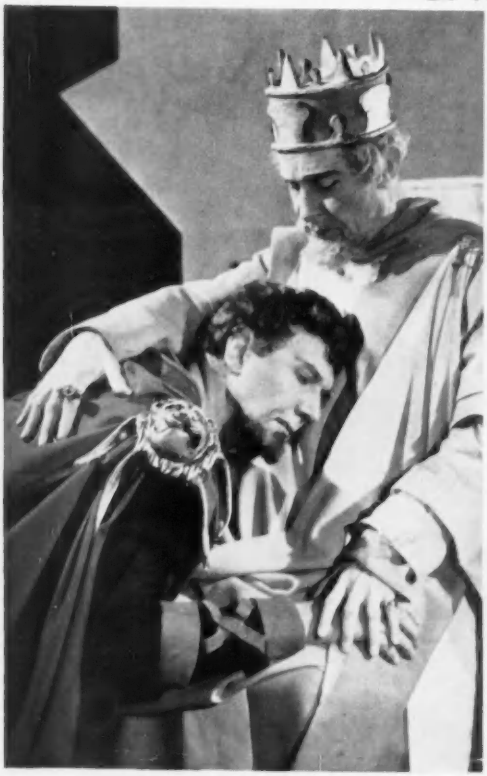
Hector meets the notorious Helen (Diane Cilento). Paris, Hector's brother, has created a delicate situation by his abduction of Menelaus's fascinating wife, who shows no sign of wanting to leave Troy. Nor are the inhabitants of the city, fascinated by her beauty, anxious to see her go.

Hector is baffled by this beautiful woman who remains unmoved by the implications of her presence in Troy, and who does not even appear to love Paris. He does, however, persuade her to agree to return to her husband, though in a moment of clairvoyance she foresees the destruction of Troy and the death of Hector.

Right: Helen lightheartedly plays on the emotions of Troilus, Hector's brother (Peter Kerr), by embracing Paris, her lover (Leo Ciceri, *left*) and making the young boy jealous.

Below: Hector, who has just achieved his great desire to close the Gates of War, kneels at the feet of his father, Priam, King of Troy (Nicholas Hannen).

Below, right: Andromache, to whom peace means so much, begs Helen not to make trouble.



Ulysses (Walter Fitzgerald), envoy from Greece, comes to threaten hostilities, but Hector, in a tremendous scene, persuades the enemy's emissary to return with Helen and convince Menelaus that war is unnecessary.

Just after Ulysses has left the Palace and is on his way to the harbour, Demokos, the poet and leader of the Senate, who has always opposed Hector's outlook, hearing there is to be peace, comes to hurl abuse at the Prince. Hector, who has kept his temper admirably in the face of the drunken Ajax's insults to Andromache, now unhappily loses control of himself and kills Demokos. As he does the poet cries out that Ajax has killed him. The mob, in revenge, kill the Greek captain, and, as fate ordained, and Helen foresaw, the Trojan War will now take place!
(John Laurie as Demokos, *right*).

Echoes from Broadway

New York Plays reviewed by our American Correspondent Mawby Green

Right (L-R) **June Walker, Dorrit Kelton, Kate Harrington and Martha Morton in "Morning's at Seven."** *(Photo by Ottomar)*

WHILE Broadway shows, with the exception of the smash hits, are wondering whether they will be able to survive the hot summer months, two courageous off-Broadway groups decided to present summer entries. Proscenium Productions are reviving Paul Osborn's *Morning's at Seven* and the Circle in the Square is offering the first American stage presentation of Arthur Schnitzler's *Reigen*, in an English adaptation by Eric Bentley, and using the title of the highly successful motion picture version, *La Ronde*.

Morning's at Seven was first produced in 1939, at which time this comedy puzzled the New York critics, who "damned it with faint praise." Seven weeks later it closed. The critics then reversed their stand and upbraided the American theatregoing public for its lack of perception in attending plays worthwhile, for it seems during its fifty-odd Broadway performances, this gentle comedy, which defies classification, continued to plague their critical faculties. In 1955, they are still trying to figure out its initial failure, while wagging their heads in surprise at how well it has stood up over the years. Actually, Broadway has produced no more than two better plays this season, and the notices showed sufficient appreciation of this fact, which should make it a decided off-Broadway hit, unless, of course—Why did audiences really stay away from this most pleasant play in 1939?

Apart from the aforementioned "the critics make or break a play" with the degree of enthusiasm of their endorsement or rejection, the most prevalent opinion is that there is no character in the play under forty, with all but two, past middle age, drifting into old age, not peacefully but with emotional, everyday problems still to be solved. This is not box office, as witness Hollywood's complete avoidance of this subject, as well as the mass circulation magazines throughout America.

The setting is "two backyards in an American town" and the leading characters are four sisters, three of their husbands, the middle-aged son of one and his fiancée—and a more mentally vacant collection could exist only in real life. Just existing from day to day takes up all their energy and under the welter of innocuous gossip that bogs them down, it is also revealed their lives are plagued with emotional cliches that would seem to be almost on a "soap opera" level, if they were not, at times, so poignantly true or humanly funny. There are, for example, the sister who wants to move with her husband into a new house, so she can be alone with him after years of sharing their home with her unmarried sister. And this spinster, in love with her brother-in-law, has been feeding her frustrations on the memory of the one night she had spent

Philip Minor and Susan Oliver in "La Ronde."
(Picture by Roy Schatt)

with him. Then there is the husband of the "slowest" sister, a failure, who wanted to become a dentist and has "spells" as he wonders when in life he took the "wrong fork in the road." His son is mam's boy, afraid to leave home and marry his fiancée of five years' standing, until he learns he is the father of her unborn child.

Obviously any of our contemporary Freudian playwrights could turn this material into the starkest of dramas but Mr. Osborn prefers to look objectively at these characters who have no self-knowledge, and it is amazingly refreshing to hear people talk naturally, unselfconsciously of "spells" without immediately rushing into the psychological jargon that has seeped into our life from those conversations from the analysts' couches.

With a play that has characters in an age group that automatically supplies seasoned performers, there are none of the seemingly inevitable amateur lapses that usually crop up in off-Broadway productions, and the *Morning's at Seven* company is giving one of the best examples of ensemble acting in recent years.

A London production of this disarmingly delightful comedy has been promised by Anne Deere Wiman, whose father, the late Dwight Deere Wiman, presented the original Broadway production.

The Circle in the Square, the group responsible, via its provocative productions, for the strong off-Broadway revival these past few years, is back in action again, after the forced closing last season of its theatre in Greenwich Village by the Fire Department for violations. Playing it safe, after the quick failure of its re-opening presentation, a dramatisation of "Huckleberry Finn," the management chose a comedy devoted wholly to sex and one whose motion picture version ran into considerable censorship trouble throughout American—Schnitzler's *La Ronde*. Higher motives may have governed this selection but it is fairly obvious that its theme is going to carry it on to success in the face of mixed notices.

Cutting through all classes of Viennese society in the 1890's, Schnitzler proves conclusively that it is sex—not public calamity—which is the mighty leveller. From the street walker to the soldier to the parlour maid to the young gentleman to the young wife etcetera, etcetera, until the count contacts the street walker and completes the cycle, the game of sex without love runs its little round too—the flirtation, the consummation, the cold withdrawal—in Schnitzler's cynical world.

With a pattern so obviously repetitious, the author must rely on his character delineations to sustain interest and hope he gets a cast capable of contributing some personal brilliance of its own. The current company, with no training in this type of performance, is ponderously inadequate, and it is greatly to the credit of Schnitzler's writing that his play comes over as well as it does. There is one notable exception in the cast, the promising Betty Miller, who gives a delicious interpretation of the young wife, full of style and wit. So completely "true" is she in this rôle that it is hard to imagine why some of her technique and approach did not rub off on to the other performers. Oddly enough, until this surprising characterisation, Miss Miller, through her television appearances, seemed destined to carve a career out of playing long-faced, sad-eyed, noble, suffering women.

Eric Bentley's adaptation is decidedly actable, although occasionally he has allowed contemporary expressions to anachronistically come from his period-customed actors.

New Shows Reviewed *(Contd.)*

Mr. Clements plays with fine realism the down-at-heel, nervy scientist, and Jane Baxter does her best with the difficult rôle of the wife. Patrick Barr and Raymond Huntley are excellent as the men from M.I.5 and Anne Leon, in a brief appearance, gives an appealing study as Laura's vivacious young sister. Henry Hewitt represents the "enemy," and Peter Collingwood contributes another good character study as the kindly landlord. Allan Davies directs the play in a suitably dowdy setting designed by Laurence Irving. F.S.

Jane Baxter who stars with John Clements, was last seen in the West End in the revival of Lonsdale's "Aren't We All" in 1953.

"Twenty Minutes South" *(St. Martin's)*

THE most clumsy thing about this new-style musical is its title. We feel "Cousin Kitty" might have filled the bill better, for *Twenty Minutes South*, which comes to the West End from the Players Theatre, tells of an interfering cousin from the country who descends on relations in a London suburb, south of the river we presume, and causes a lot of trouble, which it is true she eventually puts right.

We glimpse the Banister family in their home, at the station, in the office, in the local ballroom, and in the park, and the show sets out to do for the present-day suburbs what *The Boy Friend* does for the wealthy of a few decades ago. Highlight is the dancing arranged by Mark Stuart and executed by Josephine Gordon, Valerie Swinnard, Mavis Triall, Graham McCormack, Brian Blades, Douglas Squires and

(Continued on page 45)

Whispers from the Wings *(Contd.)*

standing of such aspects of the artistic temperament help Mr. Clurman to get the very best out of any artist lucky enough to come under his direction."

A charming statuette of Apollo stands in Mr. Redgrave's dressing room at the theatre of the same name, where he is at present playing. It was a first night gift from a devoted admirer, who writes regularly on his birthday, at Christmas and whenever he has a first night. She takes a detached and highly intelligent interest in his work and his career, but has never expressed any desire to meet him or make any demands upon his time. Apart from being a most apt choice to commemorate his appearance at the Apollo Theatre in a play about the ancient Greeks, the statuette symbolises an ideal relationship between player and playgoer. There is no question here of an admirer in the auditorium going round to the stage door to become a possessive nuisance in the private life of the artist.

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Jack Manuel. Daphne Anderson's rôle as Kitty was very roughly sketched. The discovery of the evening was Louie Ramsay, a most attractive young actress of whom we should like to see more. Devised and com-

Daphne Anderson was recently seen in "The Tender Trap" at the Saville and in 1953 appeared in the revival of "The Two Bouquets" at the St. Martin's.

posed by Peter Greenwell, with book and lyrics by Maurice Browning, the show is produced by Hattie Jacques. The attractive décor is by Reginald Woolley. F.S.

"Wild Thyme" *(Duke of York's)*

A RARE charm and melodiousness attaches to this new musical fantasy which is decorated with splendid humour by Ronald Searle. The book (in verse) and lyrics are by Philip Guard and music by Donald Swann, who directs the orchestra.

Wild Thyme is a sentimental story about a railway porter and a French concert singer who meet on a London station and run off to an idyllic spot called Wild Thyme Bay, in Devon.

Betty Paul as the singer and Denis Quilley as the porter bring considerable charm and tunefulness to their rôles. Colin Gordon is in hot pursuit as the singer's hypochondriac husband, who also benefits from the magic of Devon. Jane Wenham completes the foursome as the girl who eventually wins the porter's love, but the real humour is provided by a party of hikers—the Jay and Walker parents and their respective offspring. Enhanced by Ronald Searle's wild imagination nothing could be funnier than Julian Orchard as an outsize, wide-mouthed suburbanite camper. F.S.

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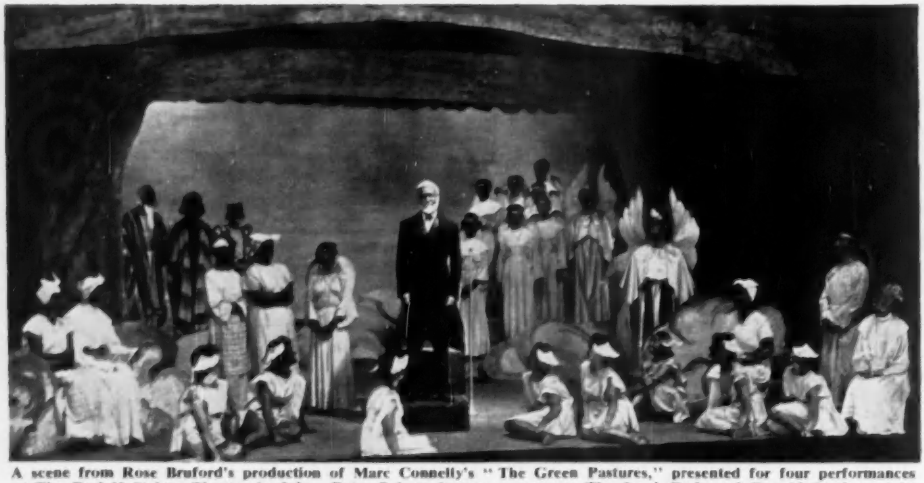

A scene from Rose Bruford's production of Marc Connelly's "The Green Pastures," presented for four performances at The Rudolf Steiner Theatre in July. Peter Palmer is seen, *centre*, as The Lord God, and Ronald Braden, *right*, as Gabriel.

The Rose Bruford Training College presents "The Green Pastures"

ONCE again Rose Bruford is to be congratulated on her enterprise. The presentation of *The Green Pastures* by her pupils was an altogether delightful experience and we were more than grateful to be able to see Marc Connelly's lovable play which, most unhappily, is banned for professional production. We wished fervently that the Lord Chamberlain might have been present to see how ludicrous is this censorship.

In a production that would make a first-rate professional company envious, Peter Palmer gave a most moving performance as The Lord God—gracious, mature and quietly humorous.

Another actor of outstanding quality was Geoffrey Hodson, who appeared as Noah, and as Moses—both as the young prophet in Egypt and as the old man in the Wilderness.

The students were again responsible for the whole of the technical side of the production, décor and costumes, under the direction of their tutors. Edric Connor, who gave invaluable help at the rehearsals, made the special recordings of Negro spirituals which so helped the atmosphere of the play.

The Guildhall School of Music and Drama presents "All in the Wrong"

THE Students of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama gave two performances, on 14th and 15th July, of *All in the Wrong*, a comedy of jealousy by Arthur Murphy, the gentleman who introduced Dr. Johnson to the Thrales. The play was well suited for performance by students and afforded very pleasant entertainment. In it, Sir John and Lady Restless, by causelessly

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suspecting each other of intrigues, bedevil the true love affair between Belinda and her Beverley through five acts.

The play was produced by Mr. Jordan Lawrence at a speed to be admired and grateful for, although it exacted some sacrifice of style and feeling. The Belinda of Miss Jacqueline Forster had fine eyes and quick intelligence but her phrases were sometimes indistinct. Mr. George Bartenieff's Beverley was certainly on the right lines. He rose to the demands of love's disturbance at the opening of Act 4. Most of the players acted and spoke from the head, with their chests deflated and their hearts untouched. Mr. Trevor Ray had just sufficient comedy to carry Restless and Miss Audrey Parker brought a certain verve to the playing of Lady Restless. In a more than usually good supporting company, the Sir William Belmont of Mr. Stanley Segal was outstanding for poise, vocal resonance and sly humour. H.G.M.

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Applications should be addressed, with all other enquiries concerning the Guild, to the Secretary: Mr. L. Johnson, 270 Conisborough Crescent, Catford, SE6.

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THE BAD SEED
Diana Wynyard, Margaio Gillmore, Malcolm Keen

APOLLO (Ger. 2663)
Evs. 7.30, Mats. Wed., Sat. 2.30
TIGER AT THE GATES
Michael Redgrave, Diane Cilento, Barbara Jefford

HIPPODROME (Ger. 3272)
Evs. 7.45, Wed. and Sat. 6 & 8.30
THE DESPERATE HOURS
Diana Churchill, Bernard Lee, Richard Carlyle

LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH (Riv. 4432)
Evs. 7.30, Thurs., Sat. 2.30
THE LARK
Dorothy Tutin
Final performance, 13th August
Commencing 8th September
THE BUCCANEER

OLD VIC (Wat. 7616)
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Evs. 7.30, Mats. Wed., Sat. 2.30
EMLYN WILLIAMS AS DYLAN THOMAS
GROWING UP
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Commencing 17th August
MRS. WILLIE
Yvonne Arnaud

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NINA
Coral Browne, William Hayter, Michael Hordern

HER MAJESTY'S (Whi. 6606)
Evs. 7.30, Wed. 2.30, Sat. 5.30 & 8.30
THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON
William Sylvester, Dickie Henderson

LYRIC (Ger. 3686)
Evs. 7.30, Thurs. 2.30, Sat. 6.0 & 8.40
MY THREE ANGELS
Ronald Shiner, Nigel Stock, George Rose

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